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Chairman: Mr. Balarezo ..... (Peru)

Contents

Agenda item 39: Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

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The meeting was called to order at 9.50 a.m.

Agenda item 39: Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions (A/59/86-E/2004/69 and A/59/293)

1. **Mr. Kennedy** (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation for countries and regions (A/59/293), said that the report covered nine countries facing a variety of humanitarian problems. Many of them, after emerging from long periods from conflict or political unrest, encountered numerous problems that they could resolve only with international assistance. The immediate concern of those countries was often the reintegration of numerous refugees and displaced persons who, on return from enforced exile, needed a roof and a plot of land or a job in order to resume a normal and peaceful life. It was the responsibility of the public authorities, with the assistance of the international community, to establish job creation, community development and national reconciliation programmes.

2. Such countries often had an infrastructure disrupted by years of conflict, an exchequer that was more or less depleted, inadequate fiscal revenue and huge external debt. They had little attraction for private investors and experienced great difficulty in making a start on their economic recovery and consequently in investing in health, education and other sectors essential for long-term productivity. National recovery programmes therefore depended heavily on outside financing. A new commitment by the international financial institutions was more necessary than ever to help such countries to ensure their development.

3. The report also revealed cases of countries that were already suffering from chronic food insecurity and that also had to contend with periods of drought and with the AIDS pandemic, which undermined the productivity of their population. When drought brought a population to the verge of famine, it was possible to mobilize massive emergency assistance. However, as drought was a recurrent phenomenon, efforts must be made to limit its impact by measures such as voluntary resettlement of populations, improved food production techniques, reforestation and more rational water resources management.

4. In conclusion, the report recommended that the situation in some of those countries that were no longer in a crisis situation and currently received assistance mainly for economic recovery and development rather than emergency assistance, should no longer be considered under the agenda item.

5. **Mr. Wahba** (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)), introducing the report on assistance to Mozambique (A/59/86-E/2004/69), emphasized the close collaboration and excellent working relations, both in the field and at Headquarters between UNDP and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

6. On emerging from the conflict, Mozambique had suffered from episodes of drought which had required coordinated action by United Nations bodies to assist it in preparing for the possibility of future episodes. On the structural level, the Mozambican Government, which was responsible for disaster management, had established the National Institute for Disaster Management which had the task of contingency planning and coordination of emergency response at the technical level and which had drawn up a contingency relief plan. At the inter-agency level, the United Nations Disaster Management Team and a working group to assist it in its work had been created with the assistance of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The Disaster Management Partners Group concentrated on information-sharing for all partners (United Nations agencies, Governments, non-governmental organizations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and donors). The basis for intervention by United Nations bodies was the Inter-Agency Consolidated Appeal which had been issued in July 2003.

7. The HIV/AIDS pandemic was also exacting a heavy toll in Mozambique, both among adults and among young people aged under 20 years, the majority of victims being women. In the areas suffering from drought and food insecurity, the pandemic increased the vulnerability of families and threatened the overall production capacity. Despite spectacular economic growth, Mozambique was the sixth poorest country in the world. In view of the situation, the United Nations bodies had reviewed the Inter-Agency Emergency

Preparedness and Response Plan so as to place greater emphasis on combating HIV/AIDS, to which they were allocating at least 25 per cent of their core resources.

8. The United Nations country team in Mozambique was calling for the strengthening of inter-agency collaboration in the field, in particular with regard to combating HIV/AIDS and reducing vulnerability, an approach that was ideally suited to joint programming. The establishment of a national disaster management plan was essential in order to provide a reference framework for all the agencies participating in risk management. The National Institute for Disaster Management should also be strengthened in order to enable it to transcend the emergency planning stage and embark on the task of coordination with a view to preparing a national disaster management plan. That being so, as the concerns that had led the General Assembly to ask the Secretary-General to submit a report specifically on Mozambique had generally been met, UNDP and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs were recommending that the Assembly should not request a further report on that country at the current session.

9. **Mr. Nieuwenhuis** (Netherlands) pointed out that several of the countries discussed in the report were transition countries and that, as the representatives of the Secretary-General had said, the item under discussion concerned more particularly the countries that had to contend with, or were recovering from, a serious humanitarian crisis. Consequently, the Secretariat should perhaps envisage interventions in situations of humanitarian distress currently being experienced by other regions not referred to in the report, such as northern Uganda and the Sudan. Referring to the question of the transition from the assistance phase to the development phase, which necessarily had organizational implications for United Nations bodies, he asked what arrangements had been made between the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UNDP for the coordination of assistance and the phased development process in the transition countries.

10. **Mr. Kennedy** (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) said that Angola was a case in point. As everyone knew, that country had been ravaged for many years by a war which had had serious repercussions and in particular had caused the displacement of about a third of the population. Once peace had been restored, it had been possible to start redirecting efforts towards reconstruction and development and effective internal arrangements had been made in that context for collaboration between the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, which was concerned essentially with relief, and UNDP, which focused on reconstruction and development. The Office had reduced its staff in the field while, at the same time, some of its functions had been transferred to UNDP or to the Government. Barring unforeseen events, the entire staff of the Office should have left the country within six months; the role of UNDP, and particularly that of the Government, would thus be reinforced. There was probably no particular approach that was applicable to all countries, but that was the outline of what had been decided in that particular case.

11. Replying to the question raised concerning Uganda and the Sudan, he said that it was for the General Assembly to decide whether it would be appropriate to request reports on those countries but that the international community should certainly address two major humanitarian crises. With regard to southern Sudan, he hoped that the Naivasha peace talks would soon be successfully concluded and that a start could be made on reconstruction and recovery. With regard to the situation in Darfur, there was no need to repeat the concerns of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. In northern Uganda, the Office was collaborating closely with the Government to address the humanitarian problems caused by the atrocities committed by the Lord's Resistance Army, the kidnapping of children and the displacement of millions of people.

12. **Mr. Wahba** (United Nations Development Programme), referring to Mozambique and Uganda, which exemplified the problems of the gradual transition from an approach based on emergency assistance provided by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to an approach that gave greater prominence to the role of the Resident Coordinator and to questions of disaster preparedness in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, said that the Framework would shortly be the subject of a midterm review and that, in that context, the provision of support for the coordination of planning and disaster relief activities was an important consideration.

13. The Chairman asked whether there were any key factors on which attention should be especially focused

in seeking to resolve the fundamental problems of the countries under consideration, despite their varying situations.

14. **Mr. Kennedy** (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) said that the international community should ensure that there was no weakening of interest in the countries concerned. When nations were in crisis, the situation was taken up by the media and — quite rightly — discussed at meetings of the United Nations and other international bodies. As soon as a crisis situation ceased to be a priority for the press and work started on the hazardous task of consolidating peace and stability, the financial, political and other support provided by the international community tended to fall away as other "urgent" crises captured its attention. It was therefore essential to retain a balanced perspective on the various problems. That was the approach adopted by his Office and, in his view, the international community should follow suit. Secondly, it was important to support the efforts of any government seeking to restore its authority and recover its capacity to govern and administer every aspect of the life of its country. The remarkable work of the Sierra Leonean Government, which had managed to re-establish its presence throughout the country after a civil war, with the support of a United Nations peacekeeping operation, provided a good example of what could be done if a government and the international community worked together.

15. **Mr. Wahba** (United Nations Development Programme) said, in support of Mr. Kennedy's remarks, that the international community must put the emphasis on long-term commitment at the financial and political level during the transition between the relief phase and the development phase. In countries such as Serbia and Montenegro or Tajikistan, efforts must be made to consolidate the achievements arising out of the direct action taken by the Government.

16. **Mr. Nieuwenhuis** (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the candidate countries Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Turkey, the countries of the stabilization and association process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro, and the countries of the European Free Trade Association, members of the European Area, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, said that the Union would make general remarks on humanitarian issues under agenda item 39 when it was discussed in plenary meeting on 11 November. Meanwhile, it wished to concentrate on difficulties arising in the context of the transition from relief to development in the countries mentioned in the Secretary-General's report on humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation for countries and regions (A/59/293) and in those currently undergoing a major humanitarian crisis.

17. It often happened that, following the end of a conflict, the humanitarian situation remained very worrying. Post-conflict countries were often confronted with the mass return of displaced persons, a devastated social or institutional infrastructure, economic deprivation and the spread of HIV/AIDS. Moreover, the humanitarian needs in post-conflict situations tended to increase rather than decrease. In the aftermath of natural disasters, too, especially in countries that were already vulnerable, humanitarian assistance remained a necessity in the medium term.

18. There were many challenges in the transition from relief to sustainable development. Although it realized that much remained to be done, the European Union welcomed the work done by the Working Group on Transition, in which the United Nations Development Group and the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs participated jointly. In transition, as during the relief phase, capacity-building was important in enabling national Governments to assume their responsibilities. Civil society should also be given the chance to develop an important role. If governments and non-governmental actors played their roles, the United Nations need to provide only support and capacity-building. Investment should be made in social sectors, with support from the international community. Education, health care — including the prevention, care and treatment of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis — and job creation were prerequisites for the transition from a humanitarian crisis to recovery and sustainable development. Special attention should be paid to women and vulnerable groups, such as children. Governments must take such action without delay.

19. The European Union welcomed the fact that, in some of the countries mentioned in the Secretary-General's report, especially the Comoros, Mozambique, Serbia and Montenegro and Tajikistan, the humanitarian situation had improved and moves towards development were under way. The experience

and lessons learned might benefit other countries in transition.

20. In other countries and regions, including several not mentioned in the report, humanitarian challenges remained, such as in northern Uganda, where, although the humanitarian situation had not deteriorated, the European Union remained concerned about the continuing insecurity and the large numbers of internally displaced persons, amounting to over a million, some of whom were out of reach of much-needed assistance. The suffering of large numbers of children was also a cause for concern. The situation was such that measures were needed in virtually every area, especially water and sanitation and health and nutrition.

21. The humanitarian situation in several parts of the Sudan, particularly in Darfur, remained very serious. Insecurity in Darfur was an overriding concern. It constituted an obstacle to the provision of aid, with the result that needs were exacerbated still further. During 2004, the Union had contributed generously to the humanitarian efforts in the Sudan. While Darfur required special attention, the considerable needs elsewhere in the country should not be neglected. An improvement in the humanitarian situation in the Sudan was essential, under the leadership of the African Union and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and with assistance from the international community.

22. In Afghanistan, a lack of security and access was also the main constraint for humanitarian aid delivery to various regions of the country. In addition to ensuring a complex post-conflict situation, Afghanistan was also vulnerable to natural disasters, such as drought and earthquakes. Its humanitarian needs persisted, especially for returning refugees and the internally displaced.

23. Although the humanitarian situation had improved since the end of conflict in Angola, economic growth had not yet resulted in better living conditions for its people, 68 per cent of whom lived below the poverty line. Good governance, capacity-building, additional resources for the sectors which were crucial for development and strong partnerships among all stakeholders were imperative during the transition phase. Food aid, water and sanitation and demining remained important, given the country's continuing vulnerability in those areas.

24. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, despite the fact that the conflict had ended, the European Union remained concerned by the continuing violence, especially against women, and by the overall humanitarian situation. The international community must provide sufficient aid to ensure that the enormous challenges facing the country could be surmounted by the Government, which should aim for a secure environment for its population, education, health care, public administration, a judicial system and job creation. The situation was still particularly difficult in the east of the country, where 4 million people were displaced. A lack of security had compounded the suffering, as outbreaks of sporadic violence restricted access for humanitarian operations.

25. The success of the 2003 relief operation in Ethiopia could be credited to many factors, including the effective early warning systems and the generous contributions by donors. In a country where only half the population had adequate food or access to water, it was important to focus further on building capacity so as to deal with the fundamental causes of vulnerability. Local capacity to respond to emergency needs was restricted and the Government should work closely with international donors to mitigate the suffering of the people.

26. A positive future for Liberia depended strongly on long-term peace, not only in Liberia itself but also throughout West Africa. Besides a regional approach to peace, other factors remained vital in the attempt to bolster the peace process in Liberia. One challenge would be to ensure the success of the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration programme, with the emphasis on reintegration, in particular through the creation of job opportunities. Another high priority was to aid the internally displaced. The rule of law should be re-established and human rights protected. Other challenges that the authorities and the international donor community should face in the short or long term were to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS, ensure access to safe water and sanitation and increase agricultural production.

27. The combined effects of HIV/AIDS, food insecurity and a weakened institutional capacity, also known as the "triple threat", weighed heavily on the social and economic situation of the people of Southern Africa. In Malawi, as mentioned in the Secretary-General's report, the food situation had improved, but there was no room for complacency.

National and international efforts in Malawi must focus on increasing the country's capacity to deal with natural disasters, chronic malnutrition due to poverty, HIV/AIDS and other development challenges in the social sectors.

28. The European Union welcomed the recent establishment of the Transitional National Government in Somalia. The prevailing drought, the persistent food insecurity and the problems relating to rehabilitation and reconstruction posed a major challenge for the new government. The European Union stood ready to continue to provide financial and technical support for a provisional, inclusive, broad-based government in Somalia. Years of anarchy, control by warlords and civil strife coupled with cycles of drought and floods had resulted in serious humanitarian needs, notably in relation to health and nutrition. Most Somali households faced a high degree of chronic vulnerability, since local coping mechanisms had been gradually exhausted. The European Union would continue to meet their needs.

29. With regard to the situation in the countries discussed under agenda item 39 (b), in which the humanitarian situation had improved considerably, the Union concurred with the conclusion contained in the Secretary-General's report that the countries should no longer be considered under that agenda item. As for the countries still confronted with humanitarian crises, the Union would continue to participate in the Consolidated Appeals Process, to which it was the largest donor.

30. **Mr. Yao** Wenlong (China) said that the allocation to Main Committees of the General Assembly of such agenda items as the one under consideration made for more focused discussion and that the submission by the Secretary-General of consolidated reports such as the one on humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation for countries and regions (A/59/293) facilitated the task of delegations preparing statements on relevant agenda items.

31. In the aforementioned report, the Secretary-General reviewed the humanitarian assistance and aid given to those countries by the international community over the preceding two years and reported on efforts made by some recipient Governments that had greatly improved the humanitarian and security situation, thus enabling refugees and internally displaced persons to return home. Obviously, however, the main issue bedeviling those countries and regions remained the lack of financial resources. The results of inter-agency appeals to mobilize resources for them had been highly uneven. In some cases, as much as 70 per cent of the planned targets had been achieved in contrast to only 20 per cent in others. For that reason, in some countries where peace had just been restored, financial resources required to rebuild economic infrastructure far exceeded government capacity and in others transiting from relief to development the shortfall in financial resources was holding back the implementation of transitional programmes.

32. China was also a disaster-prone developing country where, every year, such disasters as flooding and earthquakes caused enormous economic damage. It still provided assistance, however, within its capacity, to countries affected by serious natural disasters and other humanitarian emergencies. In 2003 for instance, China had provided through bilateral channels 18,000 tonnes of corn to Ethiopia and five other drought-stricken countries. Through UNICEF, it had donated wheelchairs to Angola and emergency relief supplies and other forms of humanitarian assistance to Somali refugees.

33. It was to be hoped that the resolutions relating to humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation for countries and regions adopted every year would be promptly implemented so that the countries afflicted by natural disasters could truly benefit from them. China called on donor countries having the capacity to do so to continue to contribute generously and to provide humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation aid to countries struck by natural disasters or engaged in post-conflict reconstruction, especially the least developed among them.

34. **Ms. Mills** (Jamaica) said that her country was pleased with the efforts being made to strengthen the coordination of United Nations humanitarian and disaster relief assistance to individual countries or regions. Jamaica, having just witnessed the devastating effect of a major hurricane, was cognizant of the challenges which plagued countries afflicted by natural disasters and of the importance of international assistance in meeting those challenges. She therefore joined other Member States in underscoring the critical role which the Organization and its partners played not only in the provision of humanitarian assistance to countries stricken by disaster or emerging from conflict but also in their reconstruction and development.

While assistance from relief and mitigation to development remained a priority, it was equally important to strengthen national capacities to cope with such developmental challenges as the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

35. Jamaica also concurred that such assistance required a multifaceted approach built on a framework of collaboration with all stakeholders to enhance the prospects for long-term sustainable development of the countries and regions involved. It was therefore fitting that the consideration of agenda item 39 (b) had followed so closely on the Committee's deliberations on the coordination and harmonization of United Nations operational activities.

36. The assistance of the international community was critical to ensuring a durable response to all the challenges mentioned in the Secretary-General's reports (A/59/293 and A/59/86-E/2004/69) and enabling the Millennium Development Goals and other international agreed goals to be realized by all countries within the set time frame.

37. **Mr. Alimov** (Tajikistan) said that 2004 marked the seventh anniversary of the signing of the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan, instituting a successful process of rehabilitation and peaceful development. During all those years, his country had spared no effort in addressing the most urgent issues of eliminating the consequences of the civil conflict, rebuilding the country and meeting the humanitarian needs of the people, including targeted assistance to socially vulnerable groups such as children, women and internally displaced persons. Those efforts had been broadly supported by the international community. The United Nations General Assembly resolutions on emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and rehabilitation in Tajikistan had played a key role in mobilizing international partners by laying a consolidated foundation for seven inter-agency appeals for humanitarian assistance to Tajikistan. The considerable resources mobilized in response to those appeals had been used to cater for the people's humanitarian needs, fund health-care delivery, provide access to safe drinking water and rehabilitate houses damaged during the civil conflict. They had also been used for natural disaster relief — with particular reference to drought, landslides, and earthquakes — which had significantly hampered development. The Government and people of Tajikistan were profoundly grateful to the international community for its invaluable assistance.

38. Through that combination of efforts, the situation in Tajikistan had changed dramatically. Peace and national concord had been achieved and political stability had become irreversible. The humanitarian crisis caused by the civil conflict had been overcome and the country was on its way to sustainable development. The groundwork for a market economy had been laid, economic stability was gaining strength and an investment-friendly environment had been created. The social situation had been improving consistently but the people remained aware that not all the problems had been resolved. The progress achieved in peaceful development needed to be consolidated. Poverty eradication, in particular, remained an urgent concern and the Government of Tajikistan continued to make every possible effort to provide the needed assistance to vulnerable groups in society.

39. The record of recent years proved that Tajikistan's successful resolution of internal conflict and transition to peaceful and sustainable development could serve as an example. Transition was an issue of major importance and, as such, had been discussed more than once at the United Nations. The fact that a country had overcome a severe humanitarian crisis and embarked on the road to development did not obviate its need for international assistance, which remained essential not only for sustaining normal life and eradicating poverty but also for accelerating the pace of development. The key issue, in that case, was to optimize the parameters and modalities of assistance and render them relevant to the stage of development at which that country found itself at a given moment. That approach had been highlighted in the Secretary-General's report (A/59/293), which emphasized that, even though there might remain some need for humanitarian and rehabilitation assistance, the bulk of international assistance should be channelled into sustainable development.

40. Among the donor countries that had put such an approach into practice was the Russian Federation, with which Tajikistan had recently concluded breakthrough agreements whereby the Russian Federation would be investing two billion dollars over five years in such strategic areas of Tajikistan's economy as hydropower, industry and narcotics control, while granting it a zero-option on its debt.

41. In view of the foregoing, the Government of Tajikistan had decided not to submit a new resolution on emergency international assistance to Tajikistan at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. At the same time, it was important for the countries mentioned in the Secretary-General's report and for the international community as a whole to share the positive experiences gained and to consider mechanisms, instruments and best practices for post-conflict development. In that connection, with due regard for the conclusions drawn by the Secretary-General, he considered it expedient to identify a relevant format for discussing at the United Nations in 2005 the positive experience of post-conflict countries. That could take the form of an informal panel discussion during the preparation for or the holding of the 2005 annual session of the Economic and Social Council. Tajikistan would continue discussing the subject with like-minded countries, the Bureau of the Council and the Secretariat with a view to finding an optimum format.

42. **The Chairman**, replying to the representative of Tajikistan, thanked him for his proposals and recalled that the Committee had just considered the question of humanitarian assistance.

43. It had indeed been examined previously by the General Assembly in a plenary meeting from a general perspective. The Committee would in turn study systematically all aspects of the question and the interrelationship between them. To that end, it would rely on the debate on the question which had taken place in the Economic and Social Council during its recent consideration of humanitarian questions. It could also use the lessons learned by the countries and regions receiving humanitarian assistance, which would allow it to identify the major themes useful to all and even to define reporting rules. It must not lose sight of the fact, however, that the basic issue was development.

44. **Mr. Atoki** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that the goals of the rehabilitation, reconstruction and reunification of the Democratic Republic of Congo were being pursued in an extremely difficult economic and social context. The Congolese people were not yet enjoying the peace dividend which was theirs by right, as the significant progress made on the political and economic fronts since the end of the war had not yet produced the desired results. The social and humanitarian situation in particular remained very precarious, as indicated by the very high maternal and child mortality rates, the deterioration of health and social infrastructure, the lack of access to basic health care and education and the malnutrition rampant among children.

45. Despite a slight improvement, the humanitarian situation remained of particular concern in the areas affected by armed conflict, where there were over 4 million displaced persons. As the Secretary-General had stressed in his report (A/59/293), the overall level of funding for humanitarian activities was insufficient.

46. Furthermore, massive human rights violations continued to be committed with complete impunity, especially in the eastern part of the country. Rape of women and girls used as a weapon of war had become commonplace and the murder of heads of households was an everyday occurrence. The social fabric, the medium for development, was being partially destroyed as a result.

47. Given those conditions, the Democratic Republic of the Congo would be unable to address all those problems without the indispensable assistance of the entire international community. It therefore especially welcomed the decision of the Security Council to request the Secretary-General, through his Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to coordinate all the activities of the United Nations system in its territory. It was also encouraged by the support of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, which had approved the country's multisectoral emergency programme for rehabilitation and reconstruction and its interim poverty reduction strategy paper, two instruments that should allow it to mobilize additional external resources and more easily repair its basic infrastructure, which had been destroyed by many years of mismanagement and war. It attached the highest priority to its continuing cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions and the ongoing consolidation and normalization of its relations with most of the donor countries and the bilateral and multilateral lenders, which would be essential in the reform efforts it had undertaken.

48. In addition, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, slowly emerging from a long war with a significant impact outside its borders, was particularly aware of the importance of regional and subregional cooperation. In its programmes, his Government was aware of the need to pool the resources of the countries

in the region. It planned to pursue a policy of dialogue, openness, friendship, cooperation and good-neighbourliness with those countries. It therefore welcomed the forthcoming International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region to be held in the United Republic of Tanzania, which was a prerequisite for the stability of Central Africa and an historic opportunity to be seized to reactivate subregional integration, a factor in peace and socio-economic development.

49. In the spirit of the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report (A/59/293), the Democratic Republic of the Congo intended to submit a draft resolution under the current item that would call for the strengthening of cooperation with the United Nations system and would once again urge the international community to support its efforts towards economic recovery, political transition and reunification of its territory, as well as humanitarian assistance to its people, improvements in its methods of governance and its struggle against poverty.

50. **Mr. Monteagegre** (Philippines) said that his country attached great importance to the humanitarian activities of the United Nations and recalled the White Helmets Initiative launched by Argentina a decade earlier and subsequently adopted by the Organization of American States. The Initiative had made a major contribution to development and advancement of voluntary humanitarian initiatives by Member States, regional organizations, NGOs and individuals. The concept had great potential, as a complement to the success of the work of the United Nations Volunteers and other similar humanitarian programmes.

51. The Philippines, with its strong tradition of volunteerism, was particularly impressed with the White Helmets as a model for a national volunteer corps ready for deployment to answer the emergency needs of its neighbours. Since it was supported by national and voluntary contributions, the Initiative would advance the humanitarian agenda of the United Nations without being an additional burden on the Organization's resources. The Philippines planned to establish its own White Helmets system and was working with its armed forces and national police and civil defence authorities as well as volunteer NGOs in order to maximize the use of available resources and to create synergy among the relevant institutions.

52. The United Nations should not lose sight of the value of the White Helmets in humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation efforts, as a component of United Nations peacekeeping operations. They could work alongside the Blue Helmets, particularly in the post-conflict peacebuilding stage. Member States should consider the possibility of making the respective international and regional voluntary bodies into national White Helmets organizations which could serve to expedite the delivery of humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation initiatives to countries and regions undergoing or emerging from conflicts or natural disasters, and regional organizations could look to them for support.

53. **Mr. Gaspar Martins** (Angola) noted with satisfaction that the Secretary-General had recommended that the situation in countries that had experienced considerable improvement should no longer be considered under agenda item 39. However, the vulnerability of individual countries to crises should be assessed.

54. Although their situation had stabilized, a number of countries still required special assistance in order to diminish their vulnerability and develop lasting solutions to ensure long-term rehabilitation, reconstruction and development. Given that it took decades to undo the destruction and devastation caused by a crisis in a country or region, Angola supported the Secretary-General's recommendation concerning stabilized crisis situations, provided that the international community continued to assist the countries concerned as they embarked on the irreversible path to sustained economic growth and sustainable development. Post-crisis assessment and a monitoring mechanism would provide the international community and the United Nations system with a means of evaluating successes, disseminating best practices and contributing to early warning mechanisms.

55. He expressed concern about the insufficient level of assistance in certain crisis situations. Regardless of whether crises were caused by natural or man-made disasters, affected countries all deserved effective, coordinated and vigorous responses from the international community designed to help them overcome the crisis and to strengthen national measures to reinstate normalcy, stability and security. Such action, which began with emergency humanitarian relief, must culminate in development

assistance. The United Nations Consolidated Appeal Process and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework remained the most coordinated and coherent ways of responding to the needs of a given country or region in the event of a crisis. Regrettably, the response to those mechanisms was sometimes insufficient to meet the needs.

56. In Angola, the civil war had led to a humanitarian crisis. Up to four million refugees and internally displaced persons had required emergency relief. In order to consolidate peace, it had been necessary to demobilize, disarm and reintegrate some 250,000 former combatants. To assist the Angolan Government with such a mammoth undertaking, the United Nations had launched the necessary consolidated appeals. Despite significant contributions from several countries, including the United States of America, Sweden and Germany, the funds obtained were insufficient. Angola called on Member States, in particular the donor community, to maintain and increase their contributions to the Consolidated Appeal for Angola and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for 2005-2008.

57. He pointed out that, despite the existence of government programmes, the spontaneous and unassisted return and resettlement of some refugees and displaced persons had occurred outside the control of the Government, the United Nations system and the non-governmental organizations.

58. The onset of peace in Angola had created an opportunity to implement programmes and strategies designed to bring about sustained economic growth and sustainable development. The Angolan Government had seized that opportunity and had introduced numerous initiatives designed to rehabilitate the economy and the destroyed economic and social infrastructures. It had, inter alia, adopted a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper that identified 10 areas for intervention, namely social reintegration, civil security and protection, food security and rural development, HIV/AIDS, education, health care, basic infrastructure, employment and vocational training, governance and macroeconomic management. The Government had adjusted the national budget to reflect those areas and had also adopted programmes designed to boost the private sector and reconstruct roads and railways. Aware that it was essential to manage its resources effectively, the Angolan Government was concentrating on institutional capacity-building, good governance and transparent management of public resources. It had acceded to the African Peer Review Mechanism.

59. In conclusion, he announced that his delegation would be introducing a draft resolution on international assistance for the economic reconstruction of Angola, with a view to reaffirming the need for partnerships between the Angolan Government and the international community in order to consolidate peace and achieve a smooth transition from relief to long-term rehabilitation, reconstruction and development.

60. **Mr. Chidumo** (Mozambique) commended the Secretary-General for the reports submitted under the agenda item, in particular the report on assistance to Mozambique (A/59/86-E/2004/69).

61. He welcomed the manner in which humanitarian activities were being carried out and reaffirmed the position taken by his delegation at the previous session of the Economic and Social Council that humanitarian assistance should create national capacities in the countries concerned. There must be emphasis on empowering local communities and enabling them to spearhead the humanitarian assistance process while the international community played a supporting role. In that context, priority must be given to developing disaster prevention, mitigation and management capacities, which might prove to be cost effective and reduce as far as possible the destruction of infrastructure and the number of victims.

62. With reference to the Secretary-General's report on assistance to Mozambique, he underlined the seriousness of the compounding effects of HIV/AIDS, which mainly affected the most productive age group of the population, and repeated natural disasters. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations had estimated that, by 2020, 20 per cent of Mozambique's agricultural labour force would be lost to HIV/AIDS and that life expectancy in that country could drop to 36 years by 2010. An increasing number of children were being orphaned by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, malaria and tuberculosis, which further increased the vulnerability of the population. Since humanitarian problems were all interrelated, the pandemic must be combated in an integrated manner and, in addition to emergency relief, humanitarian activities must have a development dimension.

63. The fight against HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis made an important contribution to peace

and stability. Consequently, the Government of Mozambique was taking vigorous measures in that area. Its activities also focused on strengthening democracy and national reconciliation and promoting economic growth and socio-economic development. The Government was also implementing the National Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty with a view to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, fighting poverty, enhancing governance capacities and diminishing vulnerability.

64. Mozambique's vulnerability stemmed mainly from underdevelopment and the weakness of its national capacity. He stressed the importance of the transition from humanitarian relief to development aid, since humanitarian relief activities were often carried out in tandem with long-term recovery and development programmes. Only development would make the population less vulnerable and less dependent on emergency assistance, by providing recipient countries with the opportunity to develop the necessary tools to face future disasters.

65. His delegation would be submitting a draft resolution on assistance to Mozambique, which would give the international community an opportunity to review the progress made by Mozambique in the area of development over the past two years. The draft resolution would make it possible to strengthen the legal and political framework for cooperation and assistance to that country. It would also describe the major political, economic and social challenges facing Mozambique.

66. Mozambique's development partners played a critical role in assisting the country as it embarked on the road to progress. Maintaining that assistance would be essential to ensure the sustainability of the political, economic and social gains made so far. While Mozambique was moving away from emergency relief towards long-term development, its reconstruction and development assistance needs were still significant. A sound and creative approach must therefore be found in order to assist the country to lay the foundations for steady, irreversible and sustainable development.

67. He recalled that Mozambique would be holding its third multiparty general elections on 1 and 2 December 2004.

68. **Ms. Andriaanse** (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) said that the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) would make a statement on humanitarian assistance in general at the plenary meeting on 11 November 2004. Under agenda item 34 (b) of the Second Committee, it would address the situation in acutely vulnerable countries.

69. In order to successfully coordinate humanitarian assistance, it was vital to include local communities and to take into account their actual needs and wants. Before providing humanitarian assistance, IFRC endeavoured to design a Cooperation Agreement Strategy (CAS) for each country, specifying its humanitarian needs. The Strategy took into account the circumstances of the country concerned, in particular its culture and traditions. Whenever possible, it also took into account the capacities and talents of national partners outside the Red Cross and Red Crescent network, the most important of which was the Government. She described the Strategy for Ethiopia.

70. The Federation attached great importance to coordination and cooperation with qualified national and local actors. Much of the debate on agenda item 39 had focused on external assistance, without reference to sustainability or national capacity. She took the view that the most effective way of obtaining lasting results from coordinated assistance was to attribute greater importance to local capacity and its strengthening. The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals would also depend on the involvement of vulnerable populations in the design and implementation of programmes.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.